

Congressman Ron Kind
Amendment to Water Resources Development Act of 2005 (HR 2864)
July 14, 2005

MR. CHAIRMAN, I HAVE AN AMENDMENT AT THE DESK.

MR. CHAIRMAN, IN THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1986 CONGRESS RECOGNIZED THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER SYSTEM AS A ‘NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT ECOSYSTEM AND A NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT COMMERCIAL NAVIGATION SYSTEM’ AND DECLARED THAT THE SYSTEM ‘SHALL BE ADMINISTERED AND REGULATED IN RECOGNITION OF ITS SEVERAL PURPOSES’.

SECTION VIII OF HR 2864 AUTHORIZES NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENTS AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION FOR THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND ILLINOIS WATERWAY SYSTEM, AND CALLS FOR THESE EQUAL COMPONENTS MOVE FORWARD IN ‘COMPARABLE PROGRESS.’

BEFORE I EXPLAIN WHAT MY AMENDMENT DOES, LET ME QUICKLY SAY WHAT IT DOES NOT DO: MY AMENDMENT DOES NOT SEEK TO ALTER OR FURTHER DEFINE THE TERM ‘COMPARABLE PROGRESS’ CURRENTLY IN THE BILL. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THE PHRASE IS SIMPLY AN EXPRESSED DESIRE THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN BE ‘BALANCED’. A BALANCED APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION OF NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENTS AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT EITHER THE TOTAL LEVEL OF INVESTMENT OR ANNUAL FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR THESE TWO ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE IDENTICAL, OR EVEN IN A STRICT, FIXED PROPORTION. RATHER, AS THE TERM ‘COMPARABLE PROGRESS’ SUGGESTS, BOTH ACTIVITIES SHOULD PROCEED CONCURRENTLY, WITH STEADY PROGRESS MADE IN REACHING EACH GOAL WITHOUT EITHER BEING NEGLECTED. CARRYING OUT THE TWO MANDATES AT ‘COMPARABLE RATES,’ AS REQUIRED BY THE BILL NECESSITATES ESTABLISHING CLEAR AND MEASURABLE GOALS. MY AMENDMENT SIMPLY SEEKS A YEARLY UPDATE FROM THE CORPS ON THEIR PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS SET FOR BOTH COMPONENTS.

MY CONCERN FOR PROGRESS ON BOTH COMPONENTS COMES FROM MY OBSERVATIONS AS CO-CHAIR OF THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER TASK FORCE. FOR EXAMPLE, I HAVE WATCHED ANOTHER ARMY CORPS' ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM - THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER SYSTEM ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM – STRUGGLE EVERY YEAR TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE APPROPRIATION FUNDING WHILE ITS 'BRICKS AND MORTAR' COUNTERPARTS FLOURISH.

MY AMENDMENT SIMPLY SEEKS TO DO TWO THINGS: FIRST, IT ADDS A NEW PROVISION REQUIRING THE SECRETARY TO MAKE AN ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS SPECIFICALLY ON WHETHER THE LOCK AND DAM CONSTRUCTION AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECTS ARE BEING CARRIED OUT AT COMPARABLE RATES. IN ADDITION, THE AMENDMENT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT CONGRESS INTENDS TO SHARE THE AUTHORITY WITH THE SECRETARY IN DETERMINING IF THE PROJECTS ARE MOVING FORWARD AT A COMPARABLE RATE AND ADJUST THE ANNUAL FUNDING ACCORDINGLY.

MR. CHAIRMAN, MISSISSIPPI LOCK AND DAM MODERNIZATION AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION ARE AN EXPENSIVE PROVISION OF THIS BILL AND THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER DESERVES TO KNOW IT IS BEING DONE RIGHT. I BELIEVE THIS FRIENDLY AMENDMENT IS NECESSARY AND WHOLLY COMPATIBLE WITH THE GOALS OF SECTION VIII OF THIS BILL, AND WITH THE 1986 WRDA.